

LUTHERAN WOMAN TODAY

JANUARY
1996

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Jesus: The Messiah
Among Us



For Growth in Faith and Mission

September a Number 10

An enormous thank-you for the superb collection of writings in the September LWT. From the cover significance of "A Good Name" to splendid articles on topics so needed today, to the clarity of James Nestingen's "The Hidden Promise," this issue was a 10!

*Martha W. Erickson
Madison, Wisconsin*

Letter to Letter

This is a response to a letter to the editor from Mrs. Roe (September issue). I thought the letter was very hurtful and untrue.

A second friend of mine has just died of AIDS. To have known these wonderful, caring, and lovable personalities was a gift. How people can totally dismiss the obvious genetic component in this issue is beyond me. To tell them to "put a geranium in your hat and be happy," become a "real" Christian—and thus heterosexual—is nonsense.

As for the Bible being Jesus... well, the Bible is a big compilation in which we all pick and choose what we want to hear. As a Lutheran, I consider myself "Christocentric" (we

are to be "little Christs") and not a bibliolater (book worshiper.)

*Carla Taylor
Minooka, Illinois*

The letter from Hazel, South Dakota in September is very interesting. It is wonderful that the gay son became a Christian. What the writer of the letter doesn't tell us, however, is whether his parents also repented and became Christians.

*Erwin H. Goldenstein
Lincoln, Nebraska*

End-of-life comment

In response to your June articles on end-of-life issues, there are many ways in which we suffer. The Bible promises we will have much to overcome and that our lives will not be easy or without pain. I believe God uses the process of dying to make believers out of nonbelievers, strengthen faith, and bring family members and loved ones closer together. Interrupting the natural dying process with assisted suicide is the same as saying, "God, I know what is better for me than you do."

In June my uncle died of AIDS. His last few months were full of sick-

Lutheran Woman Today (ISSN 0896-209X), a magazine for all women, is developed by Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and published monthly except August by Augsburg Fortress, 426 S. Fifth St., Box 1209, Minneapolis, MN 55440. Lutheran Woman Today editorial offices are at 8765 W. Higgins Rd., Chicago, IL 60631. Opinions expressed in the magazine are those of the writers and, except for the Women of the ELCA department and the Bible study, are not necessarily those of the Women of the ELCA.

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Second class postage paid at Minneapolis, MN, and additional mailing offices. Annual subscriptions: group rate, \$8.00 (regular or big print edition); individual, \$10.00 (regular or big print edition); outside North America add \$6.00 for postage. Single copies, \$1.35 (regular or big print edition). Audiotape edition for the visually impaired \$10.00. Payable in U.S. funds. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Lutheran Woman Today Circulation, Box 1209, Minneapolis, MN 55440-1209.

ness and pain. It would have been more comfortable for him to die on the day of his choice than to slowly succumb. My uncle's courage was a gift to his family and loved ones and it demonstrated his complete faith in God.

Thanks for such thought-provoking and motivating articles in LWT.

Kim Churchman

Oakville, Ontario, Canada

UPCOMING READER CALLS

Don't forget LWT's upcoming Reader Calls: June's topic is **"My Story of Healing"** and is due February 1. The July/August Reader Call is on **"The Peace I Wish for You,"** due March 25, 1996. Write this as a letter to a child, grandchild, godchild, or "the next generation."

The Reader Call for September is for **"Teacher Tributes"** (due April 1, 1996). Offer a tribute to a teacher who helped you grow in faith.

A word about Reader Calls: Submit pieces up to 350 words, either typed or printed (double-spaced), and send to: LWT Reader Call, 8765 West Higgins Road, Chicago, IL 60631-4189.

Please note the issue and topic of the call on the envelope. At the top of your essay be sure to include your name, address, and phone number.

Each writer whose Reader Call response is printed in LWT will receive a one-year subscription to LWT (for themselves or to give as a gift) as payment for one-time, first rights to their work.

Do you participate in a book group?

If so, please answer the questions below. Your answers will help LWT shape book reviews to better serve the needs of readers.

1. Is your book group primarily:
(circle your answer):
 - a) congregationally based
 - b) Women of the ELCA based
 - c) community based
 - d) other: _____
2. Does your book group read
(circle all that apply):
 - a) religious books
 - b) fiction
 - c) nonfiction
 - d) only women authors
 - e) other: _____
3. Give the titles (and authors, if possible) of the last two books your book group discussed:

a) _____

b) _____

Your name: _____

Address: _____

Daytime phone: (____) _____

☐ I would be willing to complete a more detailed questionnaire about my book group participation.

Please return this completed survey by March 1 to Kate Elliott, LWT; 8765 W. Higgins Road; Chicago, IL 60631-4189. *Many thanks!*

LUTHERAN WOMAN TODAY

January 1996

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Art & Photos: Judith Swanson, 7-11, 13-19; Lilja Baehr Design, 26-29, 30, 34-35; courtesy of Social Ministry Outreach Project, 41.

Who Do You Say That I Am?

Carolyn Keller

When my son was a toddler, we used to drive on the same road between home and the church over and over again. I was always interested in what my son noticed at different stages of his development. For many weeks he pointed out cars and trucks. It was as if nothing else existed on the road. Then he discovered traffic lights and stop signs, and concentrated on yelling "stop" at every red light and stop sign. Later he focused on questions of origin, wanting to know who made the trucks, signs, and stores we passed. The road was the same, but it was also an endless avenue of discovery.

In many ways our confession of faith in Jesus is like a familiar road. We say the Apostles' Creed over and over in worship. Unlike Peter who first called Jesus "the Messiah" (Mark 8:27-33), we know the whole story of his death and resurrection. We have an understanding of Jesus through Sunday school classes, congregational life and worship, and our own study. Yet faith is constantly new as God gives us eyes to see and ears to hear the truth afresh each day of our lives.

It is one thing to stand joyfully at the baptismal font with a lively, new baby—filled with the hopes and anxieties new parents have, hearing and seeing that this child is sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever. It is another thing to return to that promise at death, to hear that because the one we love has been united with Christ, he or she will share in Christ's resurrection. The promise and our confession in each situation are the same. But the faithfulness of God to comfort us in sorrow, to give us renewed trust when only grief seems possible, cannot be anticipated prior to the loss. It is as we mourn that we are blessed (Matthew 5:4).

In times of grief and throughout our lives we are witnesses that Jesus is our messiah—the only one who can save us. This is true not only because we remember events that happened 2000 years ago, but because today the risen Messiah is truly present as two or three are gathered in his name (Matthew 18:20).

A trained counselor may remind us of our self-worth. But only the crucified and risen Messiah has the power to heal our deepest wounds—to forgive our sins once and for all before

Our confession of faith in Jesus is like a familiar road.

God. Poets may write inspiring works about immortality. But only the crucified and risen Messiah has overcome death

and can give us hope that is not simply a wish, but reality. It is the crucified and risen Messiah who is truly present in the water of Baptism and in the bread and wine of Holy Communion. Years of history do not separate us from Jesus.

Yet years of history support us with witnesses to the faithfulness of God. The traditional liturgy, for example, reminds us of all the Christians who have gone before us, who have said the same prayers and the same creeds. Jesus the Messiah is building an enduring church just as he promised (Matthew 16:18). The word *messiah* draws us into a rich tradition of scriptural expectations. We may talk about Jesus as a teacher, a healer, a friend of sinners, a servant. All of these descriptions are accurate, yet none has the completeness of messiah. Only the Messiah could fulfill God's promise to save God's people. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 1:20 that all the promises of God find their "yes" in Jesus (Revised Standard Version).

Paul did not make this confession of faith in Jesus the Messiah immediately. Like the other religious leaders and even the disciples themselves, he first saw the cross as a scandal, a definite sign that Jesus was cursed by God. According to Deuteronomy 21:23, anyone hung on a tree, including a cross, was under God's curse. Yet God called Paul to faith, to a deeper understanding that, in the mystery of God's love for us, Jesus became a curse for us (Galatians 3:13).

Still today, Paul continues to be a reminder that no one is beyond God's grace. Paul persecuted Christians, yet later became the church's greatest missionary. Among those we know and meet in our lives, there are many people God desires to save and use as witnesses to faith. Often, at times we least expect it, God gives us the opportunity to share our confessions. A long-time friend who has no church may suddenly ask one day, "What do you really believe about God?" A child may have no one else in his or her life who will read Bible stories and talk about them

A relative may wonder if it is possible to move beyond the guilt of a life that should have been lived in a different way. Conversations like these can make us feel inadequate.

One of the greatest challenges of my life has been answering my own children's questions about God. I have been blessed with a great deal of Christian education, but again and again I am drawn back to Scripture, the liturgy, prayer, and conversations with other believers to find words my children can understand, words that engage them in a theological conversation that I hope they will continue the rest of their lives. Similarly it has been friends and acquaintances outside the church who have pushed me to think creatively and to share honestly what God has given me eyes to see and ears to hear in my journey of faith.

As we talk with others, we can never know enough. New issues and circumstances challenge all of us in the church to embody the gospel here and now—a task that has never been done before. At the same time, the older we become, what we have always confessed is simply more deeply true. Jesus is indeed the Messiah, for us and all people. **G**

Carolyn Keller, Shoreview, Minnesota, is the writer of "Jesus: The Messiah Among Us," the 1996 Women of the ELCA Bible study (see p. 13).



Ways to approach Bible study.

Tipping the Prism

Gwen Sayler

The prism on my desk looks like a solid triangle of glass. When I lift it, however, and tip it toward the sun, all sorts of amazing things happen. I see colors—bright, beautiful colors, a rainbow of color. Tipping the prism adds color to my world.

Since I'm preparing for a trip, I also have a road map on my desk. It's a necessary, helpful tool. There's little color to it, though. No matter how I tip it, all it tells me is how to get from point A to point B.

As I sit at my desk surrounded by books, a prism, a road map, and a poster announcing the 1996 LWT Bible study, I realize that,

in a way, the prism and road map illustrate two ways of approaching Bible study.

Most of us probably are familiar with what might be called the road-map approach to Bible study. We work through a biblical book from beginning to end—chapter by chapter and verse by verse. The road through each book is clearly marked. If we choose to take a side trip—for example, we might compare what we're reading with verses from other books—we are able to return quickly to our main route. This approach to Bible study is helpful. We learn the content of biblical books and gain a sense of the order in which biblical stories unfold. It is an important, useful method of Bible study.

Many religious traditions are content to stop with the road-map approach to Bible study. As Lutherans, however, we believe that the power of God's Word never can be limited simply to getting from point A to point B in a biblical book. While knowing Bible content is important, knowledge about the Bible is not the final goal of our study. We believe that God encounters us in our study of Scripture. God meets us, and we are changed. God encounters and empowers us for mission. Transformation as God's partners in mission is the final goal of our Bible study.

The prism approach to Bible study focuses on the goal of transformation. Often a theme is chosen as the basis of the study. This theme is traced through various biblical books, with an emphasis on the variety of ways in which it is expressed and developed. What happens in studying the Bible this way is similar to what happens when one tips a prism. Suddenly, we see the text in a different light. In tipping the prism, in looking at texts through the light of a theme, we see colors we've never seen before. In a rainbow of color, God meets us and loves us and transforms us for mission.

Our 1996 Bible study, "Jesus: The Messiah Among Us," is an example of the prism approach. Instead of working through one Gospel, we will tip the prism to look at pictures of Jesus in all four Gospels and in Romans. We will see who Jesus is for us and for our world: Jesus the baptized son, the tempted one, the healer, the friend of sinners,.... We will gain new insight into what it means for us that Jesus is the Messiah. God will meet us in our study and will transform us for mission.

It's time to tip the prism. May your encounter with "Jesus: The Messiah Among Us" be a riotous rainbow of color that will inspire and empower you, and fill you with great joy! **G**



Dr. Gwen Sayler is a Lutheran pastor and associate professor in Old Testament at Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa. She is a member of the Lutheran Deaconess Class of '71.

Considering Jesus the Messiah

Jean E. Lebbert



Devotion 1: Today and Everyday

Have you ever saved, say, Grandma's antique soup tureen to use for a special occasion? Ever notice how the longer you save the item, the more precious it becomes, while the occasions to use it become fewer and

fewer? The piece becomes too precious to waste on our daily lives. It becomes invaluable—and unusable.

Not so with God's love. At his baptism Jesus saw the heavens torn and God's love spilled out onto sinners. Nothing sacred being held back, the kingdom of God became now, in the moment of our Messiah's baptism.

Baptism frees us to live and to die boldly. Our lives are not so precious that we have to exert energy only to preserve them; they are vessels with which God spills love on our neighbor.

Prayer: Read as a prayer the lyrics of the hymn, "This Is the Spirit's Entry Now" (*Lutheran Book of Worship* 195).

The symbol for the 1996 Bible study in LWT, "Jesus: The Messiah Among Us," combines a cross, sun, and vines (see outside front cover). The cross, the ultimate image of Christ's messiahship, is central to the symbol. The vines represent our growth in faith and mission. Jesus, the son of righteousness, is symbolized by the sun. See the box on p. 9 to read the designer's interpretation of the symbol.

This year the symbol changes slightly each month. Note how the different images on the cross signal the focus of each session. For example, in Session 1—this month's session—the water and dove highlight Baptism as we study Jesus as "The Beloved Son."

The devotions offered here, one for each of the 12 Bible study sessions, spring from the session symbols. You may want to read all the devotions at once, as an overview. Or, you may want to save them and, each month, read the devotion for the appropriate session.



Devotion 2: The Wilderness Road

A path travels from mountains to wilderness and from wilderness to the mountains. It is a two-way path.

Jesus traveled that path—full of the Spirit and led by the Spirit. Jesus experienced temptation and turned to God's Word to resist it. In that action, we are given a path so that we can come to God in times of weakness, and go to

support the weak when we are strong. As Christians, and with the Spirit's help, we can deal with the risk of temptation.

Prayer: Read as a prayer Psalm 121.



Devotion 3: Crown of Thorns

A crown of thorns jammed on his head,
The jewels appearing when he bled,
The Word of God gasped for breath,
The Light of Life was snuffed by death.
In dread and doubt the faithful cry,
"How can our blest Messiah die?"

Yet the Source of Faith moves us to see
Beyond the grave and misery;
To see our Messiah who died for us,
So life is ours, victorious.

We must let go, if we're to give,
And we must die, if we're to live.

Prayer: *Almighty God, stir my heart, the throne of my trust, so that I may have the courage to look upon my crucified Messiah and believe in your power alone. Amen.*



Devotion 4: Heralds of the Gospel

Consider the lily. When you plant a lily bulb, you don't expect a bulb to come up. You anticipate a tiny shoot of green, and then marvel as it grows into firm stem, graceful leaves, full and fragrant blossom.

This herald of spring also teaches us about new life in Christ's resurrection.

Sin makes us feel like a drab bulb in the light of God's goodness, but because of Jesus' resurrection, sin is no longer victorious. It will temporarily separate, but it can never sever us from God's love. The resurrection changes us from bulbs to beautiful blossoms!

Prayer: *Holy God, thank you for the resurrection of our Messiah. Thank you that through Jesus we are transformed, changed. Like the lily bulb, we have beautiful new lives in your sight. Make us, like the lilies of Easter, heralds of the gospel. Amen.*



Devotion 5: Our Father in Heaven

Not much on earth looks more heavenly than sunlight piercing through storm clouds. The sight makes us feel small and earthbound, yet moves our hearts to believe in power and glory.

God's Word informs us of what God's creation inspires us to imagine. There is a heaven and a realm to come, and there will be a judgment because God is just. But our Messiah—who taught us to call God *Abba*, Daddy, and to pray always—is standing at the throne, reminding God, out of love, to answer as a doting parent.

Prayer: Pray the Lord's Prayer.

Judith Swanson designed the symbol for "Jesus: The Messiah Among Us" and explains her choice of images in this way: "Because it is where God's love took the supreme risk for us, the cross has become the main symbol of the Christian faith. In the empty cross we know both suffering and rising, death and life, judgment and mercy. Where a banner of shame once hung, we can now declare joyfully who Jesus is—the sun of righteousness who brings light and life to all who believe in him. All around the cross are the signs of life and growth that are ours as the followers of Jesus, springing from the death we confess to the life we celebrate, 'Jesus: The Messiah Among Us.'"



Devotion 6: The Healing Hand

The healing hand of our Messiah, strong and whole, brutally pierced on the cross, reaches past the cross and out to us. The hand of the one who healed us reaches out from glory into our story so that we might live eternally.

We ask God to make us whole, and God answers by making us holy.

Prayer: Read as a prayer "Lord, Take My Hand and Lead Me" (*LBW* 333).



Devotion 7: In Service

Sometimes it's not hard for women to juxtapose a symbol of servant and a cross.

Sometimes we see our gifts of servanthood as a cross we have to bear, and it's easy to go off in a huff, like Martha, back into the kitchen to fetch coffee for a fellowship hour or wash dishes after a potluck.

It's these times when our Messiah calls us away from resentment to reverence for the gifts God has given us. Through our service, the worthy weight of Christian fellowship is made known.

Through our service, God's church exists.

When we have the heart of our Messiah, we give our lives joyfully to others.

Prayer: *Dear God, stir us to hold dear the abilities you have given us. Feed us with your grace and love, so that we can be your servants. Amen.*



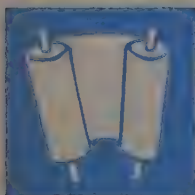
Devotion 8: Sheep

The grass is lush and sweet. And because the sun is bright and the sheep's woolly back gets warmer and warmer, the cool grass becomes more than mere food. It truly refreshes. The sheep pulls thirstily at the tufts of grass, finishing off a patch, moving on to the next. Just eating grass and keeping cool, one sheep has wandered from the flock now and is lost.

A lone sheep is easy prey to wolves. A lost sheep's life depends on the devotion of its shepherd. And a good shepherd knows that the sheep hasn't lost its value because it's lost.

Have you felt sheepish at all lately? If so, be comforted by how much the Good Shepherd loves each sheep.

Prayer: Read as a prayer "Lord, as a Pilgrim" (LBW 485).



Devotion 9: Teach Us, O Lord

The shape of a cross stands conspicuously behind the symbol of a teacher's scroll. Its simple shape is the only clue one needs to pass the "pop quiz" that Jesus was given about the law in Matthew 22:34-40.

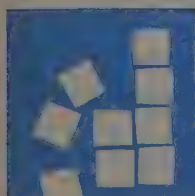
"Which is the greatest commandment?" the lawyer asked him.

Draw a vertical line to show God's descent to us and our response and you'll remember the first part to the answer: "Love God."

Now draw a horizontal bar across the first line to show how our Messiah moves us to love each other, and you'll remember the rest of the answer: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

Jesus teaches us that the law and the commandments are not difficult to remember: Make the sign of the cross as you pray.

Prayer: *Merciful Messiah, inscribe your teaching on my heart and help me every day to love and honor God and my neighbors and to appreciate all that you provide me. Amen.*



Devotion 10: The Big Picture

Look at the tumbling blocks. A stack of five blocks wouldn't fit in the little blue space here. But see! One of the blocks is falling beyond the space.

The blocks represent our rebel Messiah and remind us that there is a bigger picture than what we are able to see.

Too often we confine systems to fit only the spaces we

ee. The Pharisees confined sabbath to days and hours, and author-
y to ink and scrolls. We confine the church's mission to fit budgets
and calendars. We confine God's forgiveness only to ourselves, for-
getting others.

Jesus knocks down systems to remind us that they are tempo-
rary and to show us that there is an eternal kingdom to live for.

Prayer: *Gracious God, help us to see your kingdom here on earth.
men.*



Devotion 11: The Acquittal

The crown on the cross depicts the glory and the
gory in the gospel of Jesus, our Messiah. The
gospel shatters judgment as we fear it, because the
judge has already served our sentence!

We are free to live in the assurance that we
already have the things hoped for. We do not have
to spend everything we have on our own trial. We are freed from
putting our security first, free to love even the least of our neighbors.

Prayer: *Gracious God, thank you for the crown and the cross of our
Messiah, Jesus. Help us to live today as the inheritors of glory. Amen.*



Devotion 12: Light and Glory

The circle around the messenger's head is a nim-
bus, or halo—the aura of light and glory. The mes-
sage of Jesus' birth is one of light and glory.

A baby born in a stable is heralded by a heav-
enly army. Lowly shepherds are entrusted with
the sign of the Messiah. We, poor and miserable
sinners, are the family into whom this baby has come, and the baby
is God.

It's no wonder the season of Christmas takes on such an aura.
We make all kinds of human preparations for celebration, for we
know the Messiah is coming. And, in the process of getting ready for
Jesus, indeed, Jesus the Messiah is already among us.

Prayer: Sing or read as a prayer "Joy to the World" (LBW 39). G

*The Rev. Jean E. Lebbert is associate pastor
at Emmanuel Lutheran, Lodi, California. She
enjoys a reputation as a Bible storyteller
among members of the Sierra Pacific Synod
and Women of the ELCA.*



Why Did Jesus Have to Die?

One day as I read Bible stories to my son, he interrupted me and asked, "But, Mom, why did Jesus have to die?" Jesus loved children, had the power to make people well, and taught people about God. Yet in the end, he was arrested, forsaken by his followers, and nailed to a cross. It is not what we might expect from reading the Bible. If God protected David in his battle with Goliath, and Daniel as he faced the lions, why not Jesus?

My son's question is the key for understanding the New Testament. On every page the New Testament wrestles with the fact that Jesus, who died on a cross, was the Messiah, God's own beloved son, sent to fulfill God's promises.

Each session of "Jesus: The Messiah Among Us" will look at one aspect of Jesus' life and ministry as a means for understanding why Jesus died. We will use the flow of the church year to trigger the topic for each month. For example, in Lent we look at Jesus as "The Tempted Son" and "The Crucified Messiah." As we celebrate Easter, we focus on "The Risen Christ." The

hope is that the words of our liturgy will be enriched with deeper understanding and that, in our study, we will never lose sight of the promise that Jesus is among us as we gather in his name (Matthew 18:20).

Each study session is rich in Scripture. The study text for each session will be the focal point. The study texts will range through the Gospels (and in one ses-

sion, epistles) to bring into focus the aspect of Jesus being studied. In addition to the study texts, we will look at how the New Testament writers used the Old Testament to point to God's surprising consistency in Jesus.

You will want to have a copy of the Bible study resource book designed to take you still deeper into the session for each month. Use the audiocassette resource available to help you prepare for your personal study, or to reinforce the insights you gain.

"Jesus: The Messiah Among Us" is a Bible study, but its final end is not merely to study Jesus. Through our study we will be led deeper into our relationship with our Savior. The more we know Jesus, the greater we sense the gift God has given us, and the more the Spirit empowers us to be witnesses in a world that urgently needs to hear good news.

**For information
about the Bible
study companion
pieces, see page 19.**

Jesus: The Messiah Among Us

Carolyn Keller



Session 1 The Beloved Son Study Text: Mark 1:4-11

Memory Verse

And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased" (Mark 1:11).

Overview

As Christians, we say that Jesus was not just another man executed by the Romans. In the Apostles' Creed, we confess that he was both a human and God's Son, but what do we mean? Mark's Gospel answers this question by always seeing Jesus from two perspectives. To human eyes, to those around him, Jesus was human, but from God's perspective, he was the beloved Son, the Messiah.

What, for us, is the significance of Jesus, the holy one, joining sinners in baptism? What does baptism mean for us and our witness to others?

Opening

We celebrate the Baptism of Our Lord in January. Pray together the prayer of the day for that Sunday (*Lutheran Book of Worship*, p. 15):

Father in heaven, at the baptism of Jesus in the River Jordan



you proclaimed him your beloved Son and anointed him with the Holy Spirit. Make all who are baptized into Christ faithful in their calling to be your children and inheritors with him of everlasting life; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Jesus, the Man

Mark does not start with the story of Jesus' birth, like Matthew and Luke. Because he starts with Jesus' baptism, we might expect that Mark would give less attention to Jesus' humanity. Yet when Mark is read in its entirety, one of its striking characteristics is how human Jesus was in Mark's stories. The religious leaders were outraged that the man, Jesus, forgave sin (Mark 2:7), a role reserved for God. When Jesus taught in the synagogue near his home, the people were offended that the local carpenter, the son of Mary, should display such wisdom (Mark 6:3). Jesus was hungry and angry (Mark 11:12-17). All these characters saw only that Jesus was human. From the very beginning, Mark emphasizes Jesus' humanity by contrasting what is hidden and what is revealed.

1. Read Mark 1:4-11. Who saw the dove and heard the voice? (See verse 10.) Would another person in the crowd have seen Jesus as remarkable? Why or why not?

We confess that Jesus was without sin (Hebrews 4:15). Because of this, it might seem that John's baptism of repentance was unnecessary, or even inappropriate for Jesus. Yet as Jesus identified with sinners in the Jordan, perhaps we are given a clue as to what it means to be truly human.

Jesus, the Beloved Son

Mark does show more than just the human side of Jesus. One way Mark introduces us to Jesus as the beloved Son of God is by making a case that John the Baptist was "preparing the way" for the Messiah—who would be Jesus. We may see John only as a holy man that the crowd respected, but for Mark and his contemporaries, John's dress and actions mirrored the great prophet Elijah. Believers in those days understood that Elijah would be the prophet who would "prepare the way" for the Messiah. Mark 1:2-3 quotes two Old Testament passages to identify John as "the one who would prepare the way": Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3.



2. Malachi 4:5-6 speaks of the return of the great prophet, Elijah. According to these verses, what did Elijah's return predict? **Look again at Mark 1:2-8.** How did John prepare the way for Jesus?

As we read the account of Jesus' baptism, we can see why John said he was not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of Jesus' sandals, which was the task of a slave. Jesus' baptism was like no other. The heavens were torn apart and the Spirit descended like a dove on him. In the sheer power of such an event, even Elijah seems trivial.

The heavens being torn apart at Jesus' baptism parallels and predicts another tearing apart: the temple curtain after Jesus' death on the cross (Mark 15:38). The curtain in the temple kept ordinary people away from the Holy of Holies. Only the high priest was allowed to go behind the curtain on the Day of Atonement.

3. **Compare Mark 15:38-39 and Mark 1:10-11.**

What kind of power did it take to remove barriers between God and people?

The voice in Mark 1:11 identified Jesus' unique authority. The words "my Son" were not original with Mark, but came from Psalm 2:7. Some background on Psalm 2 is helpful. The "my son" mentioned in Psalm 2:7 was originally the king. In ancient Israel, the king was much more than a political figure. He was the agent of God. By Jesus' time, the son in Psalm 2:7 was seen as the Messiah who would restore the kingdom to Israel. By quoting Psalm 2:7, Mark was proclaiming that Jesus was the Messiah.



4. Compare Mark 1:11 with Psalm 2:7. Why do you think the voice from heaven quoted Scripture? Is there a hint that God's Word has not changed? Explain your answer.

The dove in Mark 1:10 may highlight Jesus' power even more. Some scholars have linked the dove to Genesis 1:2 where the "Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters" (Revised Standard Version). This was the same power that called all life into being.

5. Look at Mark 1:10 and Genesis 1:2. Think about Jesus' life and ministry. What stories remind you of the power that called all life into being?

What Jesus' Baptism Means for Us

As we will see in later study sessions, Jesus' baptism set an agenda that led him to the cross. Throughout his ministry, Jesus embodied the truth that the heavens were torn apart—God came near. He forgave people's sins directly. He ate with tax collectors and sinners. He acted as if there were no barriers between the holy and the unholy. He told the high priest at his trial what the voice from heaven proclaimed at his baptism, that he was the Son of the Blessed One (Mark 14:61-62). For living out his baptism, he was crucified.

Baptism: Death and Life

As Jesus joined sinners in the Jordan so long ago, God claims us in baptism just as we are. We are joined to Christ. Paul writes, "Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4).

6. If God accepts us just as we are in baptism, how was baptism meant your death? What in us dies? What does it mean to have Christ in control of your life?



In the Small Catechism, Martin Luther interprets Paul's words from Romans 6 about Baptism in the context of daily life. He says that Baptism "means that our sinful self, with all its evil deeds and desires, should be drowned through daily repentance; and that day after day a new self should arise to live with God in righteousness and purity forever."

7. How have you seen repentance lead to life? By what power are we able to have a new self? **Refer to Mark 1:8.**

Baptism is not just a private matter between God and each individual. As we become part of the church, part of the priesthood of all believers, we are called to "bear [God's] creative and redeeming Word to all the world" (see *LBW*, p. 124). Baptism encourages us in the faith and also gives us good news for others.

Sharing the Good News

Our daughter Suzanne was angry about many things. When she was three she had a new baby sister who received a lot of attention. Her older brother teased her. When she was almost four, she had open-heart surgery. Tantrums were frequent. At bedtime, Suzanne refused to say prayers. When asked why, she explained, "Jesus doesn't like people who get angry." As parents, we tried to listen, to wait, and to love her. We talked about Jesus. We also said, "You are baptized, Suzanne. Your anger doesn't change that."

A year later, it was the sign of the cross traced on her forehead that Suzanne sometimes requested at bedtime. She continues to know it is a reminder that she is baptized. Those times when she reaches up to trace the cross on my forehead, too, I also remember that nothing changes the fact that I am baptized.



Daily, in conversations with others we can return to the words "Child of God, you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever" (LBW, p. 124).

8. Imagine a conversation with one of the following people:

- a. a young person who wants to drop out of confirmation;
- b. a baptized friend who is dying;
- c. a grandmother whose grandchild died without being baptized;
- d. a friend who does not go to church, but who is interested in what you believe.

How might you discuss baptism in your conversation? Keep in mind that baptism is not something we do to please God. Baptism is God's unconditional love coming to us as a gift. The focus is God's action through Jesus, not the strength of our faith.

Looking Ahead

Session 2, "The Tempted Son," will examine the truth that Jesus was tempted in every way as we are, but was without sin (Hebrews 4:15). We will study Luke's account of Jesus in the wilderness with Satan. In preparation for that session, **read Luke 4:1-13** and learn the memory verse: Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone'" (Luke 4:4).

About the author

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"Jesus: The Messiah Among Us" is prepared by Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and edited by Catherine Malotky. Questions and/or comments about the Bible study should be sent to Marlene Joseph, director for educational resources, Women of the ELCA, 8765 W. Higgins Road, Chicago, IL 60631-4189. Copyright © 1995 Augsburg Fortress. May not be reproduced without permission.

About the Bible study in LWT



Each year, beginning with the January issue, Lutheran Woman Today carries and supports Women of the ELCA's 2-session Bible study. Pages 13-19 of this issue offer the first session of "Jesus: The Messiah Among Us." The study (including questions) are found only in LWT. To subscribe use the form on p. 49, or contact your congregation's LWT subscription coordinator. LWT is available in three formats: the digest version, in big print, and on audiocassette for the visually impaired. While supplies last, you may arrange to receive the 1995 issues you would miss while waiting for the first issues to arrive. A small fee will be charged. Call Charlotte Randolph at (800) 328-4648, ext. 347, for details.

Companion Pieces

Resources are available to enrich the study of "Jesus: The Messiah among Us":

The **Combined Leader Guide/Resource Book** is a must-have for all group leaders and would also be valuable for individuals participating in the study on their own. The leader guide offers process helps, discusses each question, and includes the resource book in one convenient format. Code: LT2-9626, \$8.95.

The **Resource Book** takes the study in LWT and "digs deeper," offering additional background information and commentary. Code: LT2-9625, \$5.50.

Both the Leader Guide and the Resource Book come with a bonus—a 45-minute **Audiocassette** that offers a devotion for each session of the Bible study. Other companion pieces include:

- A 15-minute **Informational Video** that offers a good study overview (LT2-9624, \$9.95).
- **Daily Bible Readings**, a brochure that suggests Scripture readings related to the study (LT2-9638, \$2.50 for 12 or \$15.75 for 100).
- Bible study symbol **Bookmark** (LT2-9611, \$5.95 for 100).
- Bible study symbol **Bulletin Covers**, also used for notepaper (LT2-9615, \$4.50 for 50, \$7.60 for 100).

To order the above companion pieces call Augsburg Fortress at (800) 638-3522, ext. 636.

New this year!

Dear...

Catherine Malotky
David Engelstad

Q.

My sister, who is into these sorts of things, wants to have her baby baptized in a creek. She says it's better than what we do in church, because it's "living water." And then there are my Catholic friends who talk about "holy water." Are we missing something? Isn't the water we use for baptism special enough?

Signed, Troubled Waters

Dear Troubled,

The water of baptism is special indeed! Not to worry! When it is joined with God's Word and promise of salvation, it gets all the specialness we need. The water of baptism is like a wedding ring. The ring itself may be ordinary and inexpensive. Yet when it is received with these words: "I give you this ring as a sign of my love and faithfulness," it becomes a special part of a holy union. So, too, God's Word transforms the ordinary water of baptism into an eternal sign of our holy union with God. It's as if God is saying to us, "I give you this Baptism, as a sign of my love and faithfulness." So God's Word, plus any water, makes special the sacrament we call Baptism. You could say the water is "Stirred by the Word!"

Q.

Do I have to be baptized?

Signed, Doubtful About Dunking

Dear Doubtful,

Look at our answer to the question above. Your question sounds a little like asking, "Do I have to wear a wedding ring if I'm married?" Now even though Jesus commanded his disciples to baptize all nations, baptism is not about shoulds. We are not baptized so that God will love us. Turn it around! It is because God loves us that we baptize. Baptism is an expression of God's love for us and an invitation to be drawn into an active relationship with the Triune God. Try praying about this one. Take your question straight to the top. Then listen for God's reply.

Q. *Some of my friends talk about being born again, and others talk about "believer's baptism." Is there a baptism of water, and also a baptism of the Holy Spirit?*

Signed, Swirling Eddy

Dear Eddy,

Baptism and belief belong together—just as Jesus says, all who believe and are baptized shall be saved (Mark 16:16). Baptism declares that the truth about our life is that it is God's love that creates, nurtures, sustains, and guides us. Unbelief is living as though this truth is not true—as if God's love had never been declared for us. One symptom of unbelief that plagues everyone on occasion is the notion that we have to do something to make ourselves lovable. But God loves us even when we are—or think we are—unlovable!

Some people choose to place special emphasis on that moment in their lives when this truth about God's love became very clear to them. Many describe this moment by saying, "This is when I accepted Christ as my personal Savior." When baptism is reserved for just such a moment, it is called "believer's baptism." For those who hold this belief, it is understood that the Holy Spirit is truly present and active only after this kind of baptism.

Lutherans teach that the Holy Spirit does not lie dormant in the infant who is baptized—like a promise that is only activated at the moment of decision or acceptance. We would say that the Holy Spirit is not only given in infant baptism, but is tirelessly active in awakening that growing infant to the truth of God's love. We see belief as a lifelong process of learning to recognize and appreciate the truth of and the manner in which God's love creates, nurtures, sustains, and guides us.

Not to panic, now. The truth is, God loves us all. I'm sure God will not hold up these differences to us when we are all trying to sing harmony in the heavenly chorus!

Q. *We know how to celebrate the anniversary of birth for our children, but I'm thinking that our baptism anniversaries are just as important to remember. I want to make these anniversaries festive, but I don't want to just give presents as we do for birthdays. Any suggestions?*

Signed, A Bit Adrift

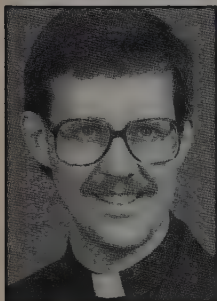
Dear A Bit,

You could try making water a central part of your celebration. For example, you could make the anniversary of a baptism a day to take a bubble bath, swim at a pool or lake, run through a lawn sprinkler, water all the household plants, canoe, fish,

wash dishes or clothes, cook with water (pasta!), or play on/in the ice and snow. If your children are old enough, ask them to help you choose a water activity. Then maybe light a candle before you start, and wonder about how God's love has made this water activity special, just as God's love made your baptismal water special.



Teaching your children that God loves to play with them is a wonderful way to honor their baptisms! Ask their sponsors to send a card on the baptism anniversary. Invite them for dinner, and tell the story about that day. Also, what might you do to honor your own baptism anniversary?



Personally, on this issue, we've been wracking our brains for a catchy name to call the day. "Happy Bapday" just doesn't work for us! Any suggestions? [GC](#)

The Revs. Catherine Malotky and David Engelstad are husband and wife. They have served, often as co-pastors, in inner-city Minneapolis and rural Minnesota. She is an Augsburg Fortress development editor and he is a chaplain in long-term care at Luther Hall, an affiliate of the Ebenezer Society. They parent two daughters, Cara and Abbie.

Ministering in daily life.

Baptized in Christ

Tina B. Krause

"What does your baptism mean? How do you minister in everyday life?"

Three women from different walks of life were asked these questions, and they considered them thoughtfully.

"It's walking the talk, serving others," asserts Deborah Griffin-Pittenger, a social worker and small-business operator who lives on Chicago's south side. "It's seeing God reflected everyday in my relationships with people."

For Janis Williams in Portland, Oregon, baptism and

ministry mean living out of what she calls "the profound comfort and intimacy that God recognizes each of us, is with us in grief and joy, and loves us unconditionally."

Attorney and mediator Brigitte Schmidt Bell concludes, "By virtue of my baptism I have no choice but to be a ministry. It's not something I can accept or reject. I will rather be a good minister or a poor one. It's important to become conscious of this reality."

Each woman—in a different set of circumstances, and with different experiences—considers her own responses to the same Messiah that came to be baptized in the Jordan and began calling disciples to follow him. Let's listen in as they reflect on baptism.

Brigitte "I went to law school because I wanted to help people," Brigitte remembers. "That's what I thought being a lawyer was about."

However, after graduation from the University of Chicago law school, she found that practicing corporate law collided with her dream. She felt isolated from people and their problems. She also saw an adversarial legal system in which winning at any cost, being a tough litigator, and reaching financial prosperity were the primary measures of value and success. The larger issues related to social justice and ethics, and the long-term welfare of the client seemed secondary.

"My faith helps me to see people as human, to be willing to see their pain and not disregard it, to be respectful of the human face of my clients."

It was the human face of her clients, her own experience as an adoptive parent, and her training in mediation that prompted Brigitte to start her own law practice specializing in family and divorce law, and mediation. She gratefully acknowledges people like her sister Silke—also a mediator and former missionary—and her pastor, Mary Anderson, who nurtured her and who continue to affirm her desire to care for others and make connections between faith and life.

"The laity are the prime ministers of the church. They are the normative Christians, the means through whom Christ enters the world and participates in every aspect of human activity. They are Christ's hands and feet and heart and mind. They are the human face of God...."

Anne Rowthorn,
*The Liberation of the Laity**

Janis In a backyard urban "oasis," lavender and rosemary scent the air. Corn and toma-

"I thought I could acquire faith by trying to live a holy life.... I discovered later...that it is only by living completely in this world that one learns to have faith."

*Dietrich Bonhoeffer,
Letters and Papers
from Prison***

toes ripen under the Northwest sky. Beneath the graceful branches of two Douglas firs, Janis Williams explains why she is celebrating the 10th anniversary of leaving her job.

"Just because I was here, at home, I was available to my neighbor who needed me." Janis' neighbor, a single mother having chemotherapy for breast cancer, found in Janis the support and help she needed for her recovery.

"All I had to do was just be. That is what I have learned in the 10 years since I left my job. I've learned to be."

Janis admits she is also a doer. With her husband, Clark, and son Collin, she is an active member of their congregation, Augustana Church, and an effective leader and volunteer in various ecumenical and social-service organizations. However, for Janis, spirituality and ministry—following Jesus, and serving others in his name—encompasses more than simply what and how much people do.

You begin with seeing through the eyes of faith, she says.

"Like seeing Jesus in the person with leprosy—or that 'awful neighbor kid' down the street, or noticing the dew on a blade of grass and being joyful about it.

"God is tenacious. Like the morning glory or the thistle, God won't be denied. God works quietly through us and in history—whether or not we are aware of it. That takes me back to being, because how can we hear the 'still, small voice' of God if we are so busy, and the clamor of our lives is so loud that it shuts God out?"

Deborah

Deborah concedes that sometimes it is hard to be open to relationship, to see the reflection of God in herself or others.

"We're so wary and afraid, especially here in the city," she says. Being in real relationship means taking chances, taking the risk to reach out and overcome the fear. Coming of age in Chicago during the height of the civil-rights movement of the 1960s, Deborah was one of 25 African-American students bused to the then all-white Marquette High School. A lifelong Lutheran, Deborah has found varying degrees of congregational support as she makes the connections between her faith and life. And there have been varying degrees of support in the fight against racism that began for her in high school and con-

continues now with her husband, Eric, who is white, and their children, Jessica and Benjamin.

Experiences of grace, as well as discrimination, have motivated Deborah toward work and a lifestyle that serves the needs of others and reflects principles of social justice. She recalls teachers and employers who encouraged her to pursue her dreams for higher education and taught her that work can and ought to be creative, productive, meaningful.

Living out of this vision for her work and life, Deborah has been a vocational counselor at a women's center, worked in special education with severely disabled and autistic children, and was the program director for a neighborhood club offering programs for all ages. In the office-support business she started and now operates from her home, Deborah values the pace and independence of self-employment.

Deborah also continues to see reflected in her work her commitment to social justice and service to others: She transcribed environmentalist Jim Schwab's interviews for the book *A Deeper Shade of Green*. She does bookkeeping for a tennis club that provides low-cost lessons to inner-city youth.

Meaningful work and faith for Deborah means not seeing herself as isolated or disconnected from people; it means not getting caught up in hierarchies and status-consciousness.

"It means developing trust and relationship, being sensitive to the needs of others, and letting people know they aren't alone."

Although the lives and experiences of these three women are different, these last words Deborah writes may summarize for them all—and perhaps for many others—the essence of what it means to live out one's baptism and show to the world the human face of God. *CGA*

Tina B. Krause is a freelance writer. She lives and works in Hyde Park on the south side of Chicago.

"Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

Luke 10:36-37



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** From *Letters and Papers from Prison* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1953).

Sealed by the Spirit, Marked by the Cross

Fran Burnford

“Child of God, you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever” (from Rite of Holy Baptism, *Lutheran Book of Worship*, p. 124).

The liturgy of Holy Baptism (*LBW*, pp. 121-125) is filled with symbols. These symbols are a powerful reminder that Holy Baptism is a sacrament both intensely personal and deeply relational and communal. Such symbols, words, signs, experiences, and events remind us that we are baptized sons and daughters of our Creator God.

As we reflect on the many symbols of Holy Baptism, we need to recall that Holy Baptism is not just for those being baptized. It is also for those who have been baptized and who now pray for those about to join their company. Baptism is an act of worship by the entire assembly, and the celebration of baptism should revitalize all who take part in it. Listen to the words of the liturgy and reflect with me on the experience:

“In Holy Baptism our gracious heavenly Father liberates us from sin and death by joining us to the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Liberation. Perhaps a symbol of liberation might be two hands held up—breaking chains on the wrists.

Resurrection. Every symbol of Christ's resurrection is also a symbol of baptism—like the butterfly and open tomb. In most Lutheran congregations the Paschal Candle, which is lighted throughout the Easter season, is also lighted for each baptism. Placing the Paschal candle near the baptismal font

After the Easter season witnesses to the connection between Jesus' death and resurrection, and baptismal death and resurrection. Easter eve and Pentecost are the ancient days for baptisms. In fact, the Easter vigil is filled with references to Holy Baptism.

The minister goes on to say: "We are born children of a fallen humanity; in the waters of baptism we are reborn children of God and inheritors of eternal life."

Baptism is **rebirth**. Whatever our age when we are baptized—infant, child, or adult—through baptism we are reborn and **adopted** into a new family. When through baptism one enters into membership in Christ's body, the church, that person passes from one community to another, from one world to another. The entire congregation declares its welcome of the newly baptized into the Lord's family saying: "We receive you as fellow members of the body of Christ, children of the same heavenly Father, and workers with us in the kingdom of God."

The baptismal liturgy includes what is often called "The Flood Prayer" because of its many water images. Reread that prayer on page 122 of *LBW* and find all the beautiful images it contains—including the flood, the pillar of cloud and fire, and the promised land. This prayer ends with: "Pour out your Holy Spirit, so that those who are here baptized may be given new life. Wash away the sin of all those who are cleansed by this water and bring them forth as inheritors of your glorious kingdom."

When we hear the story of Noah, the Exodus story, the baptism of Jesus, and other stories mentioned in the flood prayer, we should recall our own baptisms and give thanks for such a gracious gift from God.

Each time we speak the Apostles' Creed, we can recall our baptism, for it is this creed that we profess upon our baptism—or if we were too young, it was professed on our behalf. The whole assembly joins in speaking the Creed, thus declaring individually and corporately the beliefs expressed in the words of the Creed.

The Elements of Baptism

The cross, dove, shell, Paschal Candle, living water, family, community, sign of the cross, fragrant oil, "re-birth" day, naming, claiming, liberation, promises....

Water. Living, moving water, is a symbol of baptism. In our baptism, water was poured three times over our forehead, or some of us were completely immersed in water. Let water help you remember your baptism. Every day water can be the first part of your morning devotions and the last part of your evening devotions. Allow God's precious gift of life-giving water—especially as it flows over your face or body as you wash, bathe, shower, or swim—be a reminder that you are a child of God through your baptism.

Shells. The shell has been a baptismal sign since the early Christian church. Some of our congregations use a shell to pour water at the time of baptism and then present the shell as a gift to the newly baptized. Shells offer an opportunity to appreciate the beauty and variety in God's creation. Like people, no two shells are alike, and they are all beautiful in their own way.

Dove. The dove is a sign of the Holy Spirit and thus a sign and symbol of baptism. The minister says these beautiful words to the newly baptized, "Child of God, you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever."

Fragrant oil. It is at this point in the liturgy that fragrant oil is used. According to a long-standing custom in the church, the cross may be traced in oil on the forehead.

The sign of the cross. In baptism we are marked with the cross of Christ forever! Did you know that the reason we trace the sign of the cross on our own forehead, or make the sign of the cross at certain points in the liturgy, is in remembrance of our baptism? Perhaps you have never made the sign of the cross. Try it now in the privacy of your home. Quietly, reverently, trace a small cross on your forehead—as you trace that cross remind yourself that you are a child of God, sealed by the Holy Spirit, and signed with the cross of Christ forever.

I have a friend who shared with me that he grew up in a Lutheran piety where people never made the sign of the cross publicly in worship, as that was felt to be "too Catholic." But my friend has come privately to use that sign in many ways as part of his personal devotional life. For example, each day as he rides the elevator to his work in silent prayer he commits himself and his work for the day to God, tracing

the sign of the cross on his forehead to remind him of his baptism.

In my family I celebrate the baptismal anniversaries of my children and grandchildren. Each anniversary I send the family member some new sign or symbol or word to remind him or her of baptism. It may be a shell, or little container of fragrant oil or a beautiful picture of a butterfly or water scene, or an especially beautiful candle.

One day my then four-year-old grandson Adam commented that "Grandma Fran and I think a whole lot about when I was baptized." Adam is right! I want to think about the wonderful gift from God—baptism—"a whole lot."

I invite you to use, as a part of your devotional life, the baptismal hymns in *Lutheran Book of Worship, With One Voice* (the new Lutheran resource for worship), and other service books. If you want to think about the promises made in baptism, read the hymn "I Bind unto Myself Today" (LBW 188). If you want to think about the Easter message in baptism, read the poetry of "We Know That Christ Is Raised" (LBW 189).

The hymn "This is the Spirit's Entry Now" (LBW 195) helps us reflect on the role of the Holy Spirit in baptism. LBW 187, "Dearest Jesus, We Are Here," reminds us we are baptized because Christ has commanded that we be baptized.

In *With One Voice* the baptismal hymn "O Blessed Spring" (number 695) reminds us that God's promises made in the Sacrament of Baptism are with us for every season of our lives.

I invite you to enjoy your exploration of all those things that remind us *who* we are and *whose* we are through God's gracious Sacrament of Baptism. **GC**

Fran Burnford served for eight years as associate executive director of the Division for Church in Society of the ELCA. She now serves in the Senior Mentor Program at California Lutheran University (Thousand Oaks, California), working with the Women's Resource Center and as consultant to the Southern California (West) Synod.



Wow! We're Godparents!

Judy Duncan

When Andrea and Mark asked George and Josie to be godparents for their baby, they were thrilled. "We're first-time godparents!" George beamed. That night George and Josie started planning and thinking. What does it mean to be a godparent? Who will we be to this child? What are our obligations? How will we carry them out? What if we move away?

Their thoughts turned to their godchild-to-be, a baby not even born yet. What will this child be like? Who does God mean for her to become? How will we model our faith? How should we influence and nurture this child's faith?

As they prepared for church, Josie turned to George and asked, "Are we ready for this?"

"Apparently Andrea and Mark think so," George said reassuringly.



"They said they chose us because faith is obviously central in our life."

That morning four babies were baptized at church. Josie and George paid close attention to the promises of the sponsors and the congregation.

Baptism and godparenting were the topics of the day during brunch after the service. Merrill said that when her son was baptized she had wanted her boss to be a sponsor. "My pastor counseled against that choice, because my boss isn't Christian and a godparent is supposed to help the godchild come to know Jesus Christ."

"Where was your pastor when we asked my brother to be Kevin's godparent?" Don added, half joking and half serious. "We asked my brother as an honor and courtesy, and now he's not part of Kevin's

faith life at all. We hadn't really thought much about what a godparent should be. We expected to be the ones who help Kevin grow in his faith, but when I think of how difficult parenting is, I realize we need all the help we can get."

"In a sense, we are all godparents to the four babies who were baptized today," reminded Susan. "In the baptismal liturgy we all promise to support the parents in nurturing the faith of the baptized."

Josie smiled. "So we really aren't first-time godparents, are we, George?"

Over dessert, Don wondered about how their congregation could be a more welcoming and inclusive place for children. "How can children be 'co-workers in the kingdom,'" Don asked, "if we keep them from all the 'doing' in the congregation? It seems we just expect children to look and listen until they're older."

Josie and George invited the others to take part in the children's ministry board. "We're working to create more opportunities for children to be active participants in the congregation. That way, their confirmation will be a true affirmation of baptism."

"And we need to talk about ways to make worship work *for* and *with* children. Remember I'm on the worship committee," said Susan.

When baby Alice was born, Andrea and Mark and Josie and George began final preparations for Alice's baptism. They met together with their pastor. They arranged to have Alice baptized during a regular service to include

the congregation. Josie found her grandma's baptismal gown and restored it for Alice to wear. George made a keepsake box for the baptismal candle, certificate, and handkerchief.

Josie and George promised to remember Alice's baptism anniversary each year. "Every year we can, we're going to have a remembrance dinner with Alice. We'll open the box, light the candle, reread the liturgy from the baptismal certificate, tell the story of her baptism day, and remember what we promised."

How should we influence and nurture this child's faith?

Josie and George promised each other and Andrea and Mark to be a significant presence in Alice's life, especially her faith life. They promised to faithfully keep Alice in their prayers.

"I already have a pile of books ready to read with Alice," said Josie. "And most of all, George and I want to continue to grow in our faith to be good models and support for Alice."

As the congregation greeted Alice after her baptism, George squeezed Josie's hand. "Isn't it wonderful, Josie, to be godparents?" **CAG**

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Leora's Baptism

Ingeborg Anna

"In Christian love you have presented this child for Holy Baptism...."

Tonight Leora was baptized. She is small and has short, light red hair and greenish eyes that light up her face when she smiles.

Leora is 76 years old.

She called our church a few weeks ago inquiring about membership. Because of lost records, Leora could not find any proof that she had been baptized. So she asked our pastor (my husband) if he would baptize her.

We arrived at church to find Leora waiting. A relative, Olive, came to be her sponsor.

The baptismal font was filled with warm water and the Christ candle was lit. We opened our worship books and gathered around the font.

"In Christian love you have presented Leora for Holy Baptism. You should, therefore, faithfully care for her and help her in every way as God gives you opportunity, that she may bear witness to the faith we profess...."

"Do you renounce all the forces of evil, the devil, and all his empty promises?" "I do," Leora said softly.

We prayed the Apostles' Creed.



As Leora leaned over the baptismal font, the pastor poured water over Leora's head. "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

"Leora, child of God, you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever."

I was privileged to represent the congregation; I lit a candle and presented it to her: "Let your light so shine before others...."

Leora told us that her husband had died a little more than a year ago. They were married 51 years. "If he could only know all the things I have done since then," she said.

"We welcome you into the Lord's family. We receive you as a fellow member of the body of Christ...."

The baptismal certificate was filled out. Leora commented how a friend had been after her to join our church. How sometimes her friend can be "too pushy." "But this time," she said, "she pushed just right."

Peace be with you, Leora, child of God! GC

Ingeborg Anna, Greenwood, Wisconsin, is a rural preacher's wife.

My Child, Too

Marj Leegard

LeAnn was born, not with the newborn ecstasy of life, but with the inevitability of death casting a shadow around her beautiful head. Everyone knew her life would be short, and it hurt to feel the pain of her parents and little brothers. We shared tears with the grandparents and aunties. We wanted to know, "WHY?" and asked the parents what our pastor said when he visited.

"He didn't say anything," Pam said. "He just put his arms around us and we all cried." So often we want words to go before us to make the pathway smooth and fragrant and lovely. But God's promise is "presence" on every pathway we walk.

LeAnn's baptism came early on her journey. She came to church dressed in white. Her lovely little face was framed in the ruffles of her bonnet and she was cozy in her handmade shawl. Pastor Kropp held her in his arms and said to us all, "She is our baby to care for and to love."

We have heard that said in many ways. The service for Holy Baptism in *Lutheran Book of Worship* bids the congregation say, "We welcome you into the Lord's family. We receive you as fellow members of the body of Christ, children of the same heavenly Father,

and workers with us in the kingdom of God."

That thought, in formal and informal expression, took on new meaning as LeAnn's care became more difficult. Her brothers with fists full of flowers for her, and her mother and father talking to her as they soothed and caressed—all helped make it possible for professional caregivers to know her as a beloved baby and not as a difficult duty.

But it was Pam's exchange with a fellow parishioner who thought he would be more comfortable if he did not see LeAnn that gave the words added meaning for me. Pam simply said, "She is your baby, too."

Those words follow me around my congregation and community. Because children have needs, they are my needs, too. I cannot give up on the "rascals," for they are my rascals, too. The words follow me into the world. Those hungry babies are my babies, too.

Thank you, LeAnn. After just 18 months, your life on earth ended. Your blessing lives on even as you have eternal life, the promise of baptism. **CG**

LeAnn was born with hydrocephalus; it caused her death. LWT columnist Marj Leegard is from Detroit Lakes, Minnesota.

Welcome, Little One

Catherine Malotky
David Engelstad

The contractions began midday. Much preparation had preceded this. There were near-desperate yearnings to finish the pregnancy. All its creaks and groans had lost their novelty weeks ago. There was also guarded anticipation. No one can know for sure how things will go.

The contractions took ever more energy to manage. They came faster, more intensely. At first there was time to rest, even to talk. But soon every bit of her needed to focus on staying relaxed, and letting her body do its work.

Then it was time to push. Beads of sweat broke free and rolled down her face and neck. This was very hard physical labor. The baby inside her slowly inched closer to the waiting hands of father, mother, friends.

In these sacred birth moments, life hangs in the balance for mother and child. So many things can go wrong. The effort is so intense, so driven, so pointed.

And then, the child slips from the portal of her mother's body. For one moment, all is silent. You have felt this if you have ever been part of a birth. It is a silence beyond imagining, full with longing and hope. In that silence waits the spirit of the child, yearning to be claimed by those who love her.

The silence needs to be broken by the voices of those around her, "Welcome, little one. Come to us. Be ours." The tears come then, for a family is newly formed. A precious child has a home and an identity, welcome, and love.

It is like this in baptism, too. God labors as hard and long for our creation. God waits and hopes for our appearance. And when we descend into the waters of baptism, there is a way in which we are on the cusp between life and death, between drowning and cleansing. God's birth waters usher us into the life of faith; there is a moment, full of longing and hope, when the soul waits for a word of welcome.

And because God is steadfast, that word will lovingly come. "Welcome, little one. Come to me." And we are gathered into the arms of the God of all creation. Tears flow in heaven then, because a new family has begun, a new member has found a home and an identity.

And does God not claim us *even before this*? Yes, we are the fruit of God's imagination even before our baptisms. But in water and word, God makes the claim public for all to hear and see—and the church offers a welcome, too. "We welcome you into the Lord's family. We receive you as fellow members of the body of Christ, children of the same heavenly Father, and workers with us in the kingdom of God."

God gives birth to us in baptism, and our lives are changed. God declares love for us in baptism. We can cling to the promise of that love for the rest of our lives. God chose a concrete sign—water—so that we might have something to hang on to when we need to see and feel and hear...to help our believing.

So, in baptism we are joined to a family, God's family. We have many brothers and sisters in the faith, people who have also received a new identity and the promise of God's love. With this assurance, we are freed from the tyranny of wondering if we are lovable, freed from needing to earn God's favor, freed to admit our mistakes without fear of falling from God's grace.

So we join a family that thrives on seeing each other as loved by God. We bring our gifts to the business of sharing the deep peace we can know as God's beloved ones. We share God's passion for justice for all of creation.

In baptism we are sealed with the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever. It was on the cross that the power of evil—those forces that work relentlessly to tell us we don't measure up—was at its fullest power. It was on the cross that God was vulnerable to death. And it was the cross that took Jesus' life.

But the cross stands empty now, as does the tomb. Baptism does not take away evil or sin from our lives. It is not some kind of talisman. It **is** God's assurance that death will not be the last word. We belong to God's family. God will redeem our sin and sorrow, even as God raised up Jesus. This is our birthright, our inheritance. The Spirit bears us, births us, into life. **GC**

The Rev. Catherine Malotky is a development editor for Augsburg Fortress. The Rev. David Engelstad is a chaplain at Luther Hall. They are husband and wife.

The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit (John 3:8).

Even to us wise, modern folk, so educated about the weather, the wind is a mysterious force. We cherish the sensation of that first warm spring breeze and the snap of a crisp autumn wind. A summer tornado may send us to the cellar, though, and hurricanes bring destruction. And who does not shiver at the sound of the dreaded phrase, "wind chill factor?" Changeable, often unpredictable, alternately pleasurable and threatening, the wind is an astonishingly appropriate metaphor of the Holy Spirit's power.

Transforming Power of Baptism

Donna Hacker Smith

For Jesus, conversant with the world of fisherfolk and the influence of the wind on their lives, this image must have come naturally. In a discussion with Nicodemus, the Pharisee found himself

confused by Jesus' words about being "born from above" (John 3:1-5), so Jesus chose a new image to describe the actions of the Holy Spirit in a believer's life. A surprising and refreshing wind in our own lives, the Spirit is a constant and sometimes bewildering companion, from the time of our baptisms.

Think of baptisms you have experienced. Perhaps you have been a witness as your children, friends, grandchildren, or students have been baptized. In my mind's eye I see a teenager being baptized at Kumamoto Lutheran Church on a chilly spring day nearly 20 years ago. I recall Yasuhiro Tateno, a young man with a humorous and flamboyant personality, coming to the altar in pink denim overalls to be baptized by Pastor Naganuma as I, a lay missionary and the young man's teacher, watched. Baptisms in our Japanese church, rare as they were, were always moving. What direction would the strong wind of the Holy Spirit take in the life of this new brother in Christ? We

all wondered as we watched.

Considering the power and unpredictability of the Spirit unleashed in baptism, it is surprising that we are sometimes complacent about it in our modern practice of faith. God's overwhelming grace in baptism is frequently taken for granted. Our commissioning to service in the Kingdom of God in our baptism may be ignored. We neglect to respond in loving thanks to this great sign of God's love for us. Far too often, a baptism means "getting the baby done," and, maybe, an excuse for a party or family gathering.

Not so in the early church! As we read in the Book of Acts, baptism was regarded as important and life-changing. Baptism was not seen as an event that took only a moment; rather, it was seen as a redirecting of a person's life. Indeed, the powerful movement of the Spirit revealed in baptism would lead the young church in many unexpected directions. It is still doing so in the church today!

Acts introduces us to occasions when the unleashing of the Holy Spirit in baptism led to radical changes—both in the lives of individual believers and in the young Christian community.

The story of Simon in Acts 8:9-24, is a reminder that the Spirit is a *gift*. Simon, seeing the power of the Spirit being administered by Peter and John, asks if he can also receive the same ability to share the Spirit. He even offers to buy it!

Peter responds in verse 20, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain God's gift with money!" What a reminder for us today! Like Simon, we need to remember the unpredictable, wind-like quality of the Spirit. It is a gift, given when and where and to whomever God wills it. The gift of the Spirit in baptism is not something we can buy, then hoard and dole out according to some human standard or rule! The gifts of God are constantly surprising, undeserved, uncontrollable, and beyond our manipulation—like the wind!



What direction would the strong wind of the Holy Spirit take in the life of this new brother in Christ?

In the familiar story of Philip's encounter with the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-39), we are reminded of our baptismal *commission to witness* to all people. How surprised Philip must have been

to find himself involved in witnessing to—and ultimately baptizing—a person whose experience was so different from his own! Yet such is the power of the Spirit active in baptism. Tradition says that the Ethiopian went on to become an evangelist himself. What a great chain of witnesses: Philip, called by Jesus (John 1:43), spread the good news of Christ to others, including this Ethiopian, who then spread the news to many more people than Philip could ever have reached personally.

The commission to witness in baptism is as compelling now as it was in the early church. Imagine the lives we could touch every day if only we remained open to the Spirit's movement, as Philip was!

The baptism accounts in Acts also remind us that sometimes we, the church, must be prodded by God to accomplish God's purposes. Consider the account of Peter's baptism of Cornelius (Acts 10:1-11:18). The early church was struggling to accept that Gentiles as well as Jews were to be the recipients of God's love in Christ. This truth was not an easy one for them to accept. In fact, it seemed contrary to all that tradition had taught Peter and the other new Christians. Yet God's Spirit moved powerfully to prevent human conventions from restricting the spread of the new faith.

Surely that same force is at work among us, the baptized, today. The gospel continues to touch and transform lives through, among, and around us. If we let the force of our own baptisms carry us beyond human customs and barriers, each of our lives can be a personal "Book of Acts," as we carry the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ to others.

Incidentally, my former student has now become *Pastor Tatenol*! Today he is spreading the surprising and powerful news of salvation to others in Japan. The wind of the Spirit continues to sweep through the world in amazing ways and places, renewing the lives of individuals and the church. Can we allow ourselves to be carried by it as the first Christians were? **GAC**



The Rev. Donna Hacker Smith is an interim pastor at St. James Lutheran in Forreston, Illinois. She serves on the board of the Division for Ministry of the ELCA. She is married to Judge Lawrence Smith and has seven stepchildren and 11 stepgrandchildren.

For the good of the community.

Spiritual Gifts

Jean M. Morse

One day, amid the mechanical drone of the washing machine and the bubbly sounds of kids at play, the name of a woman at church came across my mind and would not leave. All day long, going about my chores, I thought of her. By afternoon, I considered calling her, but self-doubt prevented me. I did not phone, but her name rested heavy on my mind and heart. The next Sunday after worship, I caught up with her and told her what I had experienced. She said she wished I had called, as she had been having "the worst day of her life."

A few years later, I was on the receiving end of a similar situation. While going through the adjustments of moving my entire family to seminary, there were some difficult days. On one especially tough day, the phone rang. It was a classmate who knew nothing of my worries, but called to say the Holy Spirit had given her my name in prayer. She offered me some much-needed words of comfort.

After other experiences like these, I came to realize it was more than just coincidence. These unique and powerful connections are one of the many spiritual gifts the Holy Spirit uses to build the Christ-



centered community of God's church.

In 1 Corinthians 12, St. Paul refers to many kinds of spiritual gifts. Some may be given wisdom or knowledge, oth-

ers the gift of healing, teaching, or prophecy. No matter what our individual spiritual gifts, Paul writes that in these gifts, "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (verse 7).

While we may not always be aware of these spiritual gifts in our own lives, Paul encourages us in 1 Corinthians 14:1 to "pursue love and strive for the spiritual gifts." We can pray that God might show us our gifts; and, in community, we can point out those gifts to one another. Each of us can give a powerful witness by allowing the Holy Spirit to work in and through us.

With transforming faith in the risen Jesus Christ, we are called to serve those in need with justice, love, and compassion. We might make a simple phone call, send a note, or lift up someone in prayer. **GC**

Jean M. Morse serves Zion Lutheran (Bagley, Wisconsin) and St. Peter's Lutheran (Cassville, Wisconsin) as an intern from Wartburg Seminary.

LSS Helps Congregations Help Others

Debra Illingworth Greene

If they can get needed funding, a group of Lutherans will have good news for low-income people in northern Vermont.

When operational, the Good News Garage will provide vocational training for auto mechanics—especially for women, who are under-represented in the profession. The garage also will offer auto repair on a sliding-scale fee. Donated used cars will be fixed up and sold at a low cost.

A cluster of four Lutheran congregations in Burlington, Vermont, came up with the idea for the Good News Garage by participating in the Social Ministry Outreach Project (SMOP). Lutheran Social Services of New England runs the project, which helps congregations start their own social ministries in order to meet needs in their neighborhoods.

The Rev. Tom Pierotti is vice president for congregational relations and services for LSS of New England, and head of the project. He explains the idea behind the Good News Garage: "The theory here is that in northern Vermont public

transportation services are nonexistent. A lot of poor folks are stuck and unable to get to work or to needed services. The thought is to provide a place where people can have that need met so they can participate in society."

"[SMOP] has been a very good thing for us," said the Rev. Richard Neu, pastor of Ascension Lutheran Church in South Burlington. "Burlington has the same type of problems as inner cities, but on a smaller scale—but you don't think about that. It was helpful to get our congregation thinking about those problems."

The Burlington group currently is looking for a funding source for the garage. If the Good News Garage becomes a reality, it will be the first Lutheran social ministry in the state of Vermont. "I think it's exciting that we're finally getting on board," Neu says.

Through the Social Ministry Outreach Project, Lutheran Social Services of New England is returning to its roots: congregations.

"The real motivation behind this project is to take seriously the

relationship between the agency and the congregations," Pierotti explains. "Our agency got its start because a few congregations got together 126 years ago to pool their resources. This is a very deliberate attempt to get back to our roots...we are a ministry of the church and of the congregations."

SMOP is just over a year old, and already one new social ministry is in place—the Children's Community Center at St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Harwich, Massachusetts. The nonprofit center provides day care for children whose parents are on welfare. The center frees the parents to attend school and vocational programs, with the goal of getting their families out of the cycle of poverty.

According to Pierotti, 26 congregations—many working together in clusters—are in some stage of the Social Ministry Outreach Project. Pierotti says there are two parts to the process.

"The first part is Bible study," she says. "We do a pretty careful and thorough Bible study about the subject of social responsibility."

After the four-session Bible study, the group moves to a needs and resource assessment. They follow a seven-step process to uncover an unmet need in the community. That process usually takes one year, then the group designs a program to meet the need.

A new piece of the process is worship. "We've deliberately included a devotional component throughout the whole process now," Pierotti



Adele, Caity, and Eddie attend the Children's Community Center at St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Harwich, Massachusetts.

says. "If [participants] start there, with something that's familiar, they can work together better out on the streets."

Along with the obvious benefit of meeting a need in their community, participants usually encounter an additional benefit, Pierotti says. "The congregations have found it's been a way to get to know neighboring congregations."

Pierotti is willing to help spread the Social Ministry Outreach Project idea to other areas. A process guide and leader's guide are available from LSS of New England for a small charge. For more information, write to Pierotti at LSS of New England, P.O. Box 8310, One Apple Hill, 594 Worcester Road, Natick, Massachusetts 01760-0053. *AC*

Debra Illingworth Greene is a freelance writer who lives in Madison, Wisconsin, with her husband and son. They are members of Advent Lutheran.

How I Became a Daily Bible Reader

Carolyn Bolz



"Hey, that book that you're reading must be really good!" my hairdresser, Terri, remarked as she motioned me over for my appointment. "What's the name of it?"

I slid my bookmark between the pages in order to mark my place. "It's the Bible," I replied, holding it up so that she could see the cover.

"Oh," Terri replied quizzically. "That's interesting."

I felt that I should try to respond to her remark, but I hesitated. Was this a good time to explain to her why I was carrying my Bible with me as I ran my daily errands?

I wanted Terri to know that I was not trying to appear pious to the people whom I encountered. I was not trying to impress others or proselytize, either. I simply had made the decision to read the Bible daily, and by taking it with me wherever I went, I could use the time spent waiting for appointments to accomplish this goal.

As Terri shampooed my hair and then blew it dry, I thought about how I had struggled during the past few years to make time in my daily schedule for Bible reading. I would decide on a specific period of time in the morning or evening for personal study. Then with the demands of a full-time teaching job and helping my mother care for my bedridden father, my good intentions never kept up with my schedule for long.

Finally, it struck me: by taking my Bible with me each day and reading it whenever I had the opportunity, I could accomplish my goal of daily reading. It did not matter to God, I concluded, whether I was reading the Word in my home at a certain time each day, or if I read it as I waited at the beauty shop, doctor's office, or at my father's bedside.

"Well, that's it," Terri announced as she finished trimming my hair. "Should I make your next appointment for the same time next month?"

I nodded as I paid the bill. And next month, I told myself, would be ready to tell her why I brought my Bible with me to the appointment. **G**

Carolyn Bolz is a bilingual kindergarten teacher in Riverside, California. She is a member of Immanuel Lutheran in Riverside.

Brief Prayers on News Items

Sonia C. Solomonson

Your daily prayer list

What stories in the news have stopped you in your tracks? Why not add those people and concerns to your prayer list now? You might pray for:

- ◆ Those who are especially lonely or depressed after the holiday season.
- ◆ Families living in war-torn countries.
- ◆ Law-enforcement personnel who daily deal with violence and trauma.

LWF draws attention to problem of child soldiers

The Lutheran World Federation launched a campaign to focus on the many children under the age of 18 who've been recruited into armies and guerrilla forces around the world. An LWF publication, *Development Education Forum*, surveys 33 countries and contains harrowing accounts of how children have been forced to become killers. Liberia is one example; its six-year civil war has been described as a "children's war" because of the estimated 6000 children, ages 7 to 17, who have been armed and are fighting.

Move us to action, O God, and help us to find ways to stop the phenomenon of child soldiers.

What does WIGIAT have to do with your church?

At one ELCA congregation—Trinity Lutheran in Elida, Ohio—the acronym WIGIAT (Where Is God In All This?) spurred members to greater ministry in the world. The size of the congregation (about 100 members) isn't the issue, but focus is. Trinity keeps a map with pushpins to mark the workplaces in which people serve God daily. "The priesthood of all believers" and "ministry in daily life" are more than concepts to this congregation.

Loving God, bless our Monday-through-Saturday activities, and help us to see them as the ministry they are.

Dutch churches call for 'equal representation' of women

The Council of Churches in the Netherlands published a policy statement calling for representation of women and men in the church's organizations. The document calls on men to take initiative to reduce the unequal balance of power, and it calls on churches to "shake off one-sided male images of God and develop liturgical language and symbols that do justice to the life and faith of women."

Help men and women be true partners, O God of all.

Sonia C. Solomonson is a senior editor for The Lutheran.

The 1996 Budget

Charlotte E. Fiechter

February 1 marks the beginning of a new fiscal year for the Women of the ELCA, and so now is a good time to look at the budget for 1996.

A budget is a plan. How does the churchwide organization of Women of the ELCA plan to use its income to carry out its mission in 1996? What do we hope to achieve in 1996 and what will the costs be? The budget is developed by the staff and approved by the Executive Board (or the Triennial Convention every three years).

The churchwide Women of the ELCA budget for 1996 is \$5,150,700. The income pie chart (page 45) shows that for 1996, a Triennial Convention year, we expect most of our income to come from regular offerings, thankofferings, and Triennial Convention income. How do we spend that money? The second chart answers that question.

A triennial year budget is not typical. While other income and expenditures remain comparable to those in previous years, Triennial Convention income and expenses increase the numbers and make it appear as if we are spending less of our income on "regular" programming and resources. Thus, while program and other expenses will be higher in 1996 than in 1995, the percent of the budget represented

by these expenses *seems* smaller when the convention expenses are added to the budget.

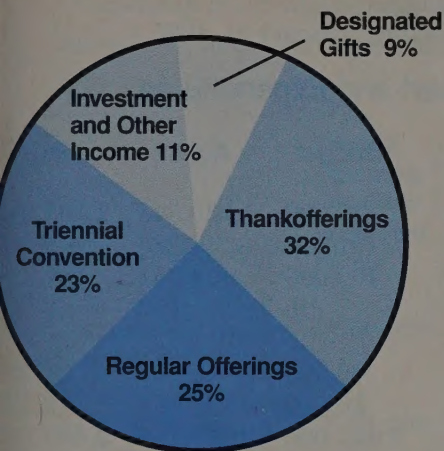
For 1996, regular offerings are expected to be 25% of income. Regular offerings come from women in the congregational units. The units send part of their income to the synodical organizations, which in turn transmit part of their offerings income to churchwide.

Thankoffering income, estimated at 32% of total income for 1996, is money collected by participants and congregational units and sent directly to the churchwide organization.

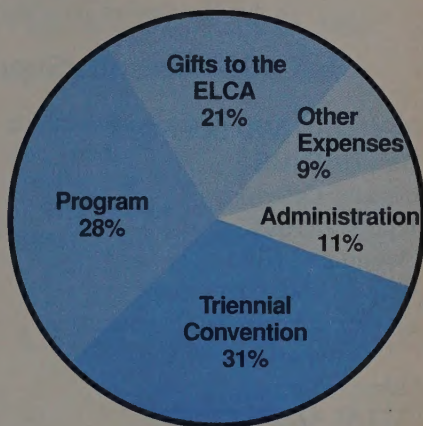
Triennial Convention income from registrations, offerings, and other sources is estimated to be 23% of total income. Other income including investment income, designated gifts, synodical convention offerings, and grants from fraternal organizations make up the balance.

The major expenditure in the Women of the ELCA budget every year is program. This includes all events, activities, and resources provided for participants by the churchwide organization and the staff cost for these. "Program" includes all activities and resources related to the triennial emphasis of Women and Children Living in Poverty, leadership development activities, training events and consultations, Bible studies, peace with justice, stewardship and literacy resources, and all o

Women of the ELCA 1996 Budget: \$5,150,700



Income



Expenses

our programmatic work with other ELCA units. For 1996, program costs are projected at 28% of the expense budget. When we add what is budgeted for the Triennial Convention, the part of the budget set aside for program comes to 59%.

The second major expense item in the budget is the Women of the ELCA "Gift to the Church." This gift, budgeted at \$1,100,000, will represent 21% of the 1996 budget.

Administrative costs are estimated at 11%. This covers salaries, benefits and travel for the general administration staff, postage, telephone, supplies, and general services.

The balance of the expense budget, 9%, is for Governance, Fundraising, and Grants and Scholarships. The governance portion supports the work of the Executive Board, including board meetings, an orientation meeting for 1996-1999 board members, and travel for the president's representatives to syn-

odical conventions and regional meetings.

Grants and scholarships money comes from income from endowments and trust funds established by women of faith and vision, and from Designated Gifts. Since 1990 we have granted more than \$1,000,000 to programs, agencies, and projects serving women and children in poverty in the United States and abroad.

While the budget is a plan, it is not written in stone. Changes may be necessary, and changes of more than 5% in any category are reported to the Executive Board.

If you have questions about this budget, or other financial matters, contact me or Jonathan Kalkwarf, director for Finance and Administration [(800) 638-3522, ext. 2728].

Charlotte E. Fiechter
Executive Director
Women of the ELCA

Financial Report

Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
for the twelve months ending January 31, 1995

1994 Revenue/Support and Expenditures

REVENUE AND SUPPORT	Budget	Actual	1993*
OFFERINGS			
Regular Offerings	1,335,000	1,230,548	1,261,849
Thankofferings	1,610,000	1,592,788	1,572,243
Designated Gifts	400,000	474,041	449,096
Fifth Birthday Offerings	0	152	44,914
Synodical Women's Organization			
Convention Offerings	40,000	45,003	54,922
Other Offerings	<u>56,000</u>	<u>95,657</u>	<u>79,723</u>
TOTAL OFFERINGS	3,441,000	3,438,189	3,462,747
 Triennial Convention	<u>0</u>	<u>176</u>	<u>488,000</u>
	3,441,000	3,438,365	3,950,747
 Investment/Other Income	<u>396,361</u>	<u>452,810</u>	<u>782,694</u>
TOTAL REVENUE/SUPPORT	<u>3,837,361</u>	<u>3,891,175</u>	<u>4,733,441</u>
 EXPENDITURES			
Mission Growth	713,470	606,650	777,748
Mission Action	391,382	336,032	418,158
Mission Community	403,470	313,399	327,261
Joint Mission Area Programming	154,450	132,933	56,108
Grants and Scholarships	159,619	236,719	192,194
Gift to the ELCA	1,100,000	1,100,000	1,067,400
Governance	110,000	66,354	92,363
Triennial Convention	74,500	98,400	1,200,277
Administrative Costs	<u>518,386</u>	<u>494,642</u>	<u>448,773</u>
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	3,625,277	3,385,129	4,580,282
 DESIGNATED/RESTRICTED			
Triennial Convention Reserves	200,000	275,000	100,000
Net Increase (Decrease) in all Other Funds	<u>12,084</u>	<u>231,046</u>	<u>53,159</u>
TOTAL EXPENDITURES AND FUND RESTRICTIONS	<u>3,837,361</u>	<u>3,891,175</u>	<u>4,733,441</u>

[*These figures represent financial year 1993, which ended January 31, 1994.]

Women of the Evangelical Church in America

BALANCE SHEET

January 31, 1995, with comparative figures as of January 31, 1994

	General Operating and Other Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds and Funds Functioning as Endowment Funds	Total all Funds	
			1994	1993*
ASSETS				
Cash and cash equivalents	50,300		50,300	50,300
Investments		4,127,514	4,127,514	3,969,231
Account receivable and other assets	77,606		77,606	11,180
Due from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America	1,629,525		1,629,525	1,414,330
Furniture and equipment (net of accumulated depreciation of \$85,548 and \$69,952 in 1994 and 1993, respectively)	24,990		24,990	34,780
TOTAL ASSETS	1,782,421	4,127,514	5,909,935	5,479,821
LIABILITIES AND FUND BALANCES				
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	126,631		126,631	202,563
TOTAL LIABILITIES	126,631		126,631	202,563
FUND BALANCES				
Unrestricted:				
Undesignated				
General operating fund	497,628		497,628	489,827
Unexpended endowment income and principal		483,487	483,487	469,842
Net investment in furniture and equipment:	24,990		24,990	34,780

*These figures represent financial year 1993, which ended January 31, 1994.]

	General Operating and Other Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds and Funds Functioning as Endowment Funds	Total all Funds 1994	1993*
Designated				
Triennial Convention	292,354		292,354	113,730
Unexpended endowment income and principal	324,586	2,308,900	2,633,486	2,419,880
Designated offerings carryover	92,043		92,043	95,150
Restricted:				
Unexpended endowment income and principal	178,442	1,335,127	1,513,569	1,446,480
Women and Children Living in Poverty	237,763		237,763	205,710
Care of Creation conference	973		973	1,410
Women in development	7,011		7,011	400
TOTAL FUND BALANCES	1,655,790	4,127,514	5,783,304	5,277,250
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND FUND BALANCES	1,782,421	4,127,514	5,909,935	5,479,820

[*These figures represent financial year 1993, which ended January 31, 1994.]

Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Purpose Statement

As a community of women

created in the image of God,
called to discipleship in Jesus Christ, and
empowered by the Holy Spirit,

We commit ourselves to

grow in faith, *affirm* our gifts
support one another in our callings,
engage in ministry and action, and
promote healing and wholeness
in the church, the society, and the world.